



## **Setting the scene**

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# 1 Setting the scene

## Small states and international security

*Anders Wivel, Alyson J.K. Bailes and Clive Archer*

### Introduction

Small states have traditionally played a marginal role in the construction and maintenance of international security orders. Accepting the dictum formulated by Thucydides in the fifth century BC, that 'the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept' (Thucydides [1954] 1972: 302), small states have tended to pursue pragmatic and reactive security policies adapting to the interests of nearby great powers and aiming primarily to ensure their own survival. As noted by Browning:

[i]n the international relations literature and in world politics size has generally been connected to capability and influence. Whilst being big is correlated with power, being small has been viewed as a handicap to state action, and even state survival.

(Browning 2006: 669)

This was true even as international affairs began to institutionalize. In the nineteenth century, the Congress of Vienna recognized the special role of the United Kingdom, Prussia, Austria, France and Russia, and for almost a century the great powers set the rules of the game by meeting 'in concert on a regular basis in order to discuss questions of concern, and to draw up agreements and treaties' (Neumann and Gstöhl 2006: 5). Small states were those states that were not great powers, i.e. the states left to obey the rules of the game, because they were too weak to be taken seriously when the rules were negotiated. In the first half of the twentieth century, conditions seemed to worsen for small states as the development of new weapons technology widened the gap between them and the great powers. As noted by Annette Baker Fox in her classic study of the power of small states:

[d]uring World War II it was widely asserted that the day of the small power was over. Not only could such a state have no security under modern conditions of war; it could have no future in the peace that presumably one day would follow.

(Fox 2006 [1959]: 39)

Superpower rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union following the end of the war simultaneously intensified and ameliorated the security predicament of small states. On the one hand, the institutions of international society were strengthened. On a global scale, the establishment and subsequent development of the United Nations served as an important vehicle for decolonization (supported by both superpowers), which helped to create a large number of new small states. Subsequently the UN served as a platform for small states voicing their concerns over international developments and cooperating on promoting their values and interests. On a regional scale, a proliferation of new regional trade agreements and organizations, most notably the precursors to the European Union, helped small states to achieve some of the economies of scale that had traditionally been the privilege of great powers. On the other hand, a world with two superpowers of continental size and global reach was also a world of even greater power disparity than had been the case before the war, with a sharp delineation between the security- (and insecurity-)producing superpowers and small state security consumers unable to defend their own territory against external (and sometimes internal) threats.

A transformed geopolitical environment after the Cold War, 9/11 and the Iraq war have fundamentally altered the security challenges of small states in Europe. Most importantly, the end of the Cold War reduced the traditional military threat to most European small states significantly. In much of Europe – at least – small states need not fear military invasion for the foreseeable future. This has widened the foreign policy room of manoeuvre considerably for these small states, as they need no longer fear that policies provoking or irritating the strong will lead to military subjugation or extinction. In addition, from the 1990s onwards, intensified globalization and increased interdependence reduced the importance of traditional military instruments in a way that highlighted both the diplomatic and institutional competencies of small states, and their possible non-state (business, intellectual, environmental) assets.

However, new security challenges soon emerged. The Gulf War of 1990–1991 and the struggle over former Yugoslavia created new demands for active conflict management, and small states were expected to contribute to their solution even if their immediate security interests were not under threat. The repercussions of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, emphasized the global aspect of small state security. As the European experience has illustrated, this does not necessarily mean the end of great power politics. The gradual development of the EU as a security actor, and the frequent use of informal big member state consultations in EU security policy making, illustrates that Europeanization entails challenges as well as opportunities (Wivel 2005). At the same time economic, societal and environmental security issues present all states with a new set of challenges including financial crisis, increased competition over markets, migration, terrorism and global warming.

## **The aim of the book**

The aim of this book is to conceptualize, map and explain the security challenges of small states today. We specifically aim both to identify the challenges and the opportunities of small states and to discuss the costs and benefits of the different security strategies followed by small states inside and outside Europe. Throughout the history of international security, small states' relative lack of power has given them less influence over international events and a smaller margin of time and error (Jervis 1978: 172–173). As permanent security consumers they have had little to offer the great powers and therefore, also, a limited room for manoeuvre when pursuing strategic goals beyond security and survival. As the strategic environment of small states is changing, so are their opportunities and incentives to engage actively in the creation and maintenance of security orders.

Even though the literature on small state security has been growing rapidly since the end of the Cold War, there have been few attempts to go beyond single country studies and provide a comprehensive overview of the general pattern of challenges, opportunities and strategies facing small states in the current security order. Now, as in the past, the study of small states is plagued by a lack of cumulative insights and coherent debate. This book aspires to fill this void by taking three steps towards a more generally applicable understanding of small state security. First, we discuss how the transformation of small state security necessitates the development and application of new security concepts, and extends the range of possible solutions. Second, we analyse a number of European cases in order to describe and explain the security predicament of small European states today and how they respond. Third, we explore examples of small state security in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean to see how they compare or contrast with the European experience. All this helps to produce comparative insights, drawn from the conceptual discussions and empirical analyses, and reflected in the chapters of Part III.

We do not seek to prove a certain theoretical school – realist, liberal or constructivist – right or wrong. Our research strategy is to start from a shared definition of small states, to focus on the security challenges and opportunities of small states today and in the recent past, and to structure the analyses within each part of the book with a set of questions to be answered by each chapter within that part. Thus, our aim is not to construct and test a grand theory of small states, but to offer a structured and focused analysis of small state security today. We also acknowledge that different theories may shed light in different places, and that variations in historical, geopolitical and institutional contexts will affect the applicability of general theories to small state security over time and space.

## **Defining small states in international security**

Students have not reached a consensus on how to define a small state or which behavioural characteristics may be seen as typical for small states, beyond the general tendency of such states to adapt to – rather than dominate – their external

environment, and (where applicable) to seek influence through membership of international institutions (Amstrup 1976: 178; Antola and Lehtimäki 2001: 13–20; Archer and Nugent 2002: 2–5; Christmas-Møller 1983: 40; Hey 2003: 2–10; Knudsen 2002: 182–185; Panke 2010: 15; Steinmetz and Wivel 2010: 4–7).<sup>1</sup> Thus, although most students would agree with Hey, that today '[s]mall states [...] enjoy more international prestige and visibility than at any other time in history' (Hey 2003: 1), they would find it hard to agree upon what exactly constitutes a small state.

Despite this lack of consensus, analyses of small state security tend to focus on material power capabilities, i.e. the possession of – or rather the lack of – power resources in absolute or relative terms; most often measured by proxies such as population size, GDP (gross domestic product) or military expenditure. Historically, this type of definition follows directly from the development of international society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when the number of small states rose sharply as a consequence of the break-up of empires and decolonization. The class of small states was a 'residual category', referring to those states that were not great powers and thus were defined by 'their presumed lack of power in a quantitative sense' (Neumann and Gstöhl 2006: 4). Theoretically, this type of definition typically follows from a starting point in the realist school of international relations, which has historically been the dominant approach to the analysis of international security, including the security problems of small states.<sup>2</sup>

Three benefits follow from defining small states in terms of capabilities. First, if we are to analyse the opportunities, challenges and limitations of a specific state, indications of absolute and relative capacity are important, because they inform us of the absolute and relative limitations on these states' capacity to handle different types of challenges. Second, an absolute and universal threshold between big and small states of, for example, a population size of 15 million people, or a GDP of €500 billion, has the benefit of creating a clear and easily applicable definition of small states. The same can be said of a relative definition defining great powers as the 'top ten' in the world, or the 'top five' in a specific region – measured in, for example, population size, GDP or military expenditure – and the rest as small states. Also, the existing power indexes of the (realist) IR literature, which seeks to combine a number of parameters in order to evaluate the aggregate power of states, may be adapted to the analysis of small states (Kennedy 1987; Schweller 1998; Wohlforth 1999).

Third, starting from a power possession definition allows us to draw on the comprehensive literature on power and security in international relations in order to identify why, when and how the security challenges of small states are distinct from those faced by stronger states. For instance, Kenneth Waltz, the pre-eminent scholar of relative capabilities, discusses the implications of power (and the lack of it) and notes that: (1) 'power provides the means of maintaining one's autonomy in the face of force that others wield', (2) 'greater power permits wider ranges of action, while leaving the outcome of action uncertain', (3) 'the more powerful enjoy wider margins of safety in dealing with the less powerful

and have more to say about which games will be played and how', and finally (4) 'great power gives its possessors a big stake in their system and the ability to act for its sake' (Waltz 1979: 194–195). Following this discussion, it could be argued that small states: (1) are not able by themselves to preserve their own autonomy in the face of force that others wield; (2) have a narrow range of action; (3) have little to say about which games are being played, and how; (4) have only a small stake in the system and are unable to act for its sake. These four points correspond closely with a traditionalist view of small states in international security. Throughout the book, the authors of individual chapters use these four assumptions as a starting point for discussing to which extent this view is still relevant for the states analysed.

Yet despite the merits of the power possession definition of small states and its prominence in security studies, we find that it has at least three important limitations. First, it leads us to a focus on the military dimension of security. A focus on material power resources naturally leads to a focus on military security, because military capabilities are decisive for state survival in conventional warfare. Even when human and economic resources are included in the definition of material power, these tend to be regarded as components of 'latent power' necessary for upholding and developing the military power capabilities that are vital for survival in an anarchic international system (e.g. Mearsheimer 2001). To be sure, military security threats continue to be important to the large majority of small states, but, as argued in Chapter 2, an exclusive focus on military threats is too restrictive if we are to understand small state security today. Most importantly, we risk underestimating the opportunities and contributions of small states if we focus on material, and in effect military, capabilities, because conventional military power is the area where most small states are weakest.

Second, as argued by Rothstein, a focus on quantifiable objective criteria logically leads to a ranking of powers and an understanding of international relations in terms of power hierarchy, which is of little use for identifying the real challenges and opportunities of small states (Rothstein 1968). There are two problems with this understanding in regard to analysing small state security. First, security challenges to small states are rarely systemic but typically originate in the geopolitical vicinity of the small state. Second, we cannot deduce a state's security challenges from its power rank in the international system, or even in a given region. Security conflicts are typically the product of power as well as a number of other factors, such as historical lessons learned by the political elites and the electorate, religion, ideology, the personality of decision-makers and political institutions. Thus, challenges to small state security often make most sense within a specific spatio-temporal context, now including their specific role in, and adjustment to, globalized features of the world scene. It follows that no matter whether we focus on absolute or relative power, the criteria for defining the cut-off line between small states and great powers will always be arbitrary, and this problem is only aggravated if we introduce additional categories such as middle powers and micro-states.<sup>3</sup> There is no reason why a country with 20 million people should be a great power and a country

with 18 million should be a small state, or why number five in Europe – measured in military expenditure – should be characterized as a great power and number six should not. Would numbers one to five face a different set of shared problems than numbers six and seven? Would they follow a shared strategy distinguishable from that followed by numbers six and seven to solve these problems? So far, the evidence clearly suggests that they would not.

Finally, the power possession definition is based on the premise that we can quantify and measure power. However, power is difficult to measure and its effects are almost impossible to distinguish from the calculations and perceptions of policy makers. Thus, the cut-off point between big and small states is rarely self-evident, and, accordingly, there is no consensus on what constitutes a small state in term of power possession. Indeed, the notion ‘small state’ has typically been used to denote at least three different types of states: micro-states, small states in the developed world and small states in the Third World (Hey 2003: 2). Adding to the confusion, none of these categories is clear-cut and there is agreement on how to define them. Micro-states are sometimes defined according to the size of their population, typically with the threshold set somewhere between 100,000 and 1.5 million inhabitants (cf. Anckar 2004: 208; Mohamed 2002: 1; Neumann and Gstöhl 2006: 6; Plischke 1977: 21), but at other times micro-states are defined by having ‘a size so diminutive as to invite comment’ (Warrington 1998: 102). Likewise, small states in the developed world have been defined using a number of different and often incompatible criteria, leading to confusion over how to recognize a small state when we see one.

Thus Väyrynen, in a survey on the concept, identifies two axes for defining small states (Väyrynen 1971). One axis focuses on whether the defining criteria for small states are objective, e.g. size of GDP or population, or subjective, e.g. perceptions of domestic or foreign elites. The other axis focuses on whether the defining criteria are endogenous, i.e. internal characteristics of a country, or exogenous, i.e. the country’s relations with other states.<sup>4</sup> Adding to the complexity, small states in the Third World usually have much larger populations than what we term small states in the developed world, because ‘population size is taken as a proxy of a range of other economic characteristics – all of which are deemed to bestow particular vulnerabilities on small states’ (Heron 2008: 246). Thus, in his now classical study *The Inequality of States*, David Vital studies small states with, ‘...a) a population of 10–15 million in the case of economically advanced countries and b) a population of 20–30 million in the case of underdeveloped countries’ (Vital 1967: 8).

Acknowledging this limitation, as well as the difficulties of measuring power and its consequences, we have proposed to the authors in this book a move away from the quantifiable power possession definition of small states to one that is qualitative and relational (cf. Mouritzen and Wivel 2005b; Rothstein 1968; Toje 2010). We thereby accept the argument recently made by several scholars that, rather than continue the search for universal characteristics of small states and their behaviour, the ‘small state’ concept is best used as a ‘focusing device’ for highlighting the characteristic security problems and foreign policy dilemmas of

the weaker actors in asymmetric power relationships (Mouritzen and Wivel 2005b; Thorhallsson and Wivel 2006; Rickli 2008; Wivel 2005).<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly, we define a small state as the weaker part in an asymmetric relationship, which is unable to change the nature or functioning of the relationship on its own (cf. Mouritzen and Wivel 2005a: 4; Grøn and Wivel 2011; Steinmetz and Wivel 2010). Following this definition, small states ‘are stuck with the power configuration and its institutional expression, no matter what their specific relation to it is’ (Mouritzen and Wivel 2005a: 4). For instance, if the United States chose to remove its troops from the European continent or to leave NATO, or if China chose to abandon the Security Cooperation Organization (SCO), this would radically change these institutions and therefore the nature, magnitude and intensity of the security challenges for all other member states. But if Denmark left NATO or Tajikistan left the SCO, the consequences would mainly be felt by these small states themselves. Therefore, such states cannot credibly threaten to leave, alter or destroy institutional structures: one important way in which their strategic challenges and options differ from those of great powers. However, today, a small state typically acts simultaneously in a number of different power configurations with different sets of actors, and therefore a state may be weak (‘small’) in one relation, but simultaneously powerful (a ‘great power’) in another. For instance, Romania is a great power in its relations with Moldova but a small state in its relations with Russia, and Denmark is a small state in NATO but a great power in relation to the Baltic countries. Thus, we argue that being a small state is tied to a specific spatio-temporal context and that this context – rather than general characteristics of the state defined by indicators such as its absolute population size or its military expenditure relative to other states – is decisive for both the nature of challenges and opportunities, and the small states’ answer to these challenges and opportunities.

This definition shifts the analytical focus from the power that states *possess* to the power that they *exercise*. From this point of departure the authors of this book use the concept of small states as a ‘focusing device’, directing us towards interesting research puzzles stemming from ‘the experience of power disparity and the manner of coping with it’ (Knudsen 1996: 5; cf. Gärtner, 1993: 303; Rickli 2008; Thorhallsson and Wivel 2006; Wivel 2005: 395). Thus, ‘[s]mallness is, in this conception, a comparative and not an absolute idea’ (Hanf and Soetendorp 1998: 4). It brings to our attention a particular set of security problems and foreign policy dilemmas, allowing us – among other things – to distinguish between issue areas where the notion of small state is relevant, and issue areas where it is not.

### Contents of the book and chapter summaries

This shared approach to the definition of small states helps to ensure the analytical coherence of the book. Further, the chapters share a common time frame. All chapters focus on the present and on the recent past (since the end of the Cold War), although authors include references to the more distant past

whenever it is relevant for understanding the challenges, opportunities and politics of the present. Finally and crucially, coherence and comparability within each section of the book is ensured by a single set of questions that all chapter authors were asked to consider, as set out below.

### *Small state security revisited: history, concepts, theory*

The book is organized into three parts. The first part, 'Small state security revisited: history, concepts, theory', provides the conceptual and analytical framework for the volume. This introductory chapter and the next chapter (which discusses the security of small states) establish the general framework and shared premises of the book. The three following chapters discuss new functional approaches going beyond traditional, military notions of security: economic security, societal security and environmental security. The authors of these three chapters have sought to answer the following questions: (1) How do you define this particular dimension of security? (2) Why is it important for small states? (3) How has the understanding and impact of this dimension of security changed over time for small states? and (4) What lessons and apparently useful tools for small states' internal and external governance have emerged?

In Chapter 2, Alyson Bailes, Jean-Marc Rickli and Baldur Thorhallsson explain the practical and theoretical developments that have led to wider and more diverse security concepts entering the realm of public policy since the late twentieth century. More fields of life, such as economic management, energy supply or health, have been brought within the scope of security or have been recognized as including security dimensions. Security processes are understood to operate not only between states, but also at trans-state and sub-state levels and they increasingly involve non-state actors – businesses, terrorists, media or the ordinary citizen – as agents, as well as objects or victims. A wider variety of international organizations than before have competence to address at least some part of the security spectrum, and security governance within the state is attracting new attention as the importance of managing it both efficiently and in accord with human rights and democratic norms is realized. The subjective nature of many perceptions in the security field has further been acknowledged by the concept of 'securitization', which asks who first defines a given issue as a security challenge, and by what means public assent is acquired to tackle it with suitably robust methods.

As a starting-point for considering how this affects small states, the authors propose a four-line table of potential threats and risks, covering, respectively: traditional military problems, non-state human threats, economic and social vulnerabilities and accidental and natural hazards. While each small state will have a specific mix of such concerns – both objectively, and in terms of what is 'securitized' – some general assumptions can be made, starting with the permanent disadvantages of a small administration facing traditional military threats at home or abroad. For the other three categories of risks, small states' limited resources expose them to deeper damage from a single event, but their small

scale may also make it easier to comprehend and solve some problems. At bottom, a small polity must choose between a passive and neutralist orientation in international society, or an active one. The latter choice is becoming more typical as non-military threats can rarely be solved by inaction, and the peace-keeping vogue calls for small states to contribute to global goods even in the military mode. The widening of agendas also means that a single large-state protector is unlikely to be able to resolve all its protégé's problems, so that the role of *the institution as shelter* is becoming more central to small state strategies at least in regions (and there are several) where this option exists. Multilateral organizations, whose governance is reasonably pluralistic, can even offer a kind of 'escape from smallness' by giving small states a theoretically equal say in framing collective security policies. Though big-small dynamics still work to their disadvantage within the structure, some small players – such as the Nordic countries – have managed to edge whole institutional communities towards giving, at least, lip-service to norms – such as peaceful resolution of disputes and concern for the global commons – that are bound to profit the small. The question is how much a small state opting for institutional integration has to 'pay' in return for such benefits, and whether the bargain may even be more subtly erosive of the weaker party's identity than traditional power relationships have been – on which more below.

Chapter 3, by Richard Griffiths, deals with the economic and financial aspects of the strategic plight of small states: an issue on which the literature, as noted, has swung from pessimism to optimism and back since the beginning of the twentieth century. He argues that (relative) economic success or vulnerability can only be addressed today in a context of open international trade and interdependence: it is not just about basic provision for one's citizens, but about the ability to survive the shocks that a volatile global system brings. In this context, above all, a numerical measure of 'smallness' can tell us little, since a rich, developed state will have different challenges, and solutions at its disposal, from a poor developing one with the same size of population. In fact, the various indices developed to try to measure vulnerability regularly show a preponderance of small states in the most vulnerable class, but also position some nations, like Luxembourg, Switzerland and the Netherlands, in the least vulnerable group. In particular small, developed states have often been judged favourably in terms of adaptability and resilience. As in other fields of security, what seems to matter is less the common weaknesses of the small and more, the effectiveness of different strategies used to counter them. The high import needs and limited export potential of small economies can, for instance, be cushioned from the worst shocks within a structure of long-term economic commitments and common rules such those provided by regional organizations. While fiscal levers may be less effective, volatile commodity prices could be evened out by creating a national stabilization fund. Other aspects of internal organization may, in the end, be even more crucial: social cohesion, a 'corporatist' system based on compromise among economic partners, and general good governance to avoid – *inter alia* – waste through corruption. Such factors may explain the intriguing finding

that small independent states often weather crises better than neighbouring sub-state regions of similar size and wealth. They are solutions available, in principle, to the poorest of small states as well as the richest.

Chapter 4, by Alyson Bailes, returns to the issue of today's wide, multi-functional definitions of security and asks how a small state with limited financial and human resources can cope with such a potentially confusing agenda. A solution adopted by most Nordic states (under one name or another) is the concept of 'societal security', which views a functioning, peaceful society in itself – distinct from the level of the state, or the isolated individual – as a security good and a resource for security building. In practice, in these countries, societal security policies have become focused on the handling of non-warlike emergencies and on the best ways to bring state and non-state actors, including the private sector and citizens' volunteer groups, together for the purpose. This focus on the event, rather than on creeping and dispersed risk factors such as social or environmental change, may in itself be disputed; but the societal security approach does have some *prima facie* generic advantages for small states. Among other things, the recognition and prioritization of a wide range of risks – from terrorist action to natural disasters – gives room for compromise among different schools of thought and their securitizations, including those who reject a military focus. Non-state actors in small nations may also have strengths, including an understanding of the globalized environment, that the state authorities lack. Nevertheless the societal vision has its own weaknesses, starting with the question of how to define 'society' itself – rarely monolithic in modern conditions, and not necessarily coinciding with state boundaries. Bailes concludes that the use of a specific name or concept is immaterial, but small states in any region might improve their security strategies and implementing structures by asking themselves the same questions as those raised by the 'societal' agenda.

Chapter 5, by Auður Ingólfssdóttir, addresses one of the 'softest', if not genuinely the newest, sections of the modern security spectrum: the concern for environmental security, currently deepened by an awareness of the multiple, and probably severe, impacts of climate change. She explains that environmental security itself can be addressed either in a more traditional light, focusing on the links between environment and conflict dynamics, or in a broader context of 'human security' – a concept introduced in Chapter 2 – where implications for health, the economy and other personal circumstances would be considered as equally important. As with other non-military hazards, local environmental risks can sometimes be easier for a small polity to handle, especially when well-resourced, and climate change is putting states of all sizes in jeopardy. A small state is, however, much less likely to be able directly to mitigate the process, given its low carbon emissions, and it may have little room to adapt if – like some small island states – the next decades could see its whole territory submerged. In fact, these latter states have grouped together to achieve international recognition of their plight: offering a further example of how multilateral, institutionalized approaches to common security problems may allow small actors to

influence emerging norms even among far more powerful actors. Taking the Nordic states as a test-case, Ingólfssdóttir suggests that the requisites of success in such a tactic are a record of international activism and expertise, of setting a good example by domestic action and of the coincidence of negotiating positions with real national interests. If this conclusion helps to underline the importance of national security governance as addressed in Chapter 2, Ingólfssdóttir also stresses that small states do not necessarily get the equation right: even the Nordic countries have sometimes bartered environmental norms for short-term economic advantages or sectoral interests.

### *Small state security in Europe*

The second part, 'Small State Security in Europe', covers illustrative groups of small states and micro-states in the wider setting of Europe, moving from some examples that have been extensively analysed in a 'small states' framework to others that have not yet been addressed in this perspective, or are under-studied in general. Each chapter addresses these four questions: (1) Why is/are this particular state/these particular states relevant/interesting? (2) What are the most important security challenges faced by the state/s in question and how do the challenges relate to their 'smallness'? (3) What are the most important characteristics of this state's/these states' security policy? (4) Does the analysis yield important insights and/or lead to important policy advice for other states?

A general observation regarding Europe's smaller states is that, with a few exceptions (notably Luxembourg), they tend to be spread around the peripheries of the continent and are more often strategically exposed than sheltered. The fact that they have, in modern times, a rather good record of survival – and in many cases also of wealth and wellbeing – says something about the range of solutions that this macro-region offers for giving them shelter, ranging from national partnerships to the world's most sophisticated and strong multilateral security organizations. This set of states thus provides the obvious first place to look for the benefits, costs and other implications of post-modern solutions to relational asymmetry that go beyond traditional bandwaggoning and/or subjection.

The five Nordic states that are introduced in Chapter 6, by Clive Archer, are a diverse group in every way: from their size (Iceland's population numbering one-third of a million and Sweden's population approaching ten million) to their formal strategic orientation (three being members of NATO and two being militarily non-allied). The chapter rightly stresses these variations, as they make even more interesting the question: Why has the Nordic region remained so stable since 1945 while producing such a positive 'surplus' of high-minded international activism? The fact that the countries have no tensions, or damaging competition, among themselves may be just as fundamental a part of the answer as the *de facto* US strategic umbrella that, for now, remains in place over the whole sub-region. Given these two basic features, the fact that the Nordics have evaded a local defence pact among themselves and relied rather on NATO/EU coverage to manage their asymmetrical position vis-à-vis Russia has actually



served the interests of stability and global freedom of action for all concerned in the North. For dealing with modern, trans-frontier security problems, however, and for ensuring that the norms promoted by such small players do in fact impact on world governance, the non-legalistic and practical web of intra-Nordic security cooperation is also very important – and is now growing in scope and significance.

The Baltic States provide both parallels and contrasts with their Nordic neighbours, and both aspects are well brought out in Chapter 7, by Mindaugas Jurkynas. Not only are Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania closer to Russia and thus exposed to one of Europe's most blatant strategic asymmetries, but, having been more than once engulfed by Russian/Soviet power, their very identity includes an apparently indelible anti-Russian streak. Consequently, 'hard' security concerns have pushed them into a shared strategy of outright, maximal integration with both the EU and NATO, combined with efforts to earn protection from the US. They have also profited from several tiers of neighbourhood cooperation, including many kinds of Nordic help, short of actual guarantees. Their particular paradox is that while playing the post-modern integration game to the hilt, they have remained stubbornly modern in the zero-sum aspects of their strategic outlook. Even these states' newer, non-military security challenges are still largely seen through a Russia-related (energy, cyber-safety) or an identity-related (migration, minorities) lens. Tellingly, also, in all three nations the level of consensus experienced and the bureaucratic solutions used for 'hard' and 'soft' security issues, respectively, are quite different.

With the Western Balkan states covered in Chapter 8, by Višnja Samardžija and Senada Šelo Šabić, even more dramatic security challenges come into the picture. In the last two decades this region has witnessed bloody conflict among states and entities qualifying as 'small', and their deconstruction into even smaller entities (most recently, Kosovo and Montenegro). Today, peace is measurably being consolidated – with the help of still-present international missions – but serious challenges remain in non-military security, democracy, and the general quality of governance. NATO and EU integration comes into play here, not only as a way of building immunity against mutual and external attack, but also as a force for *transforming* identity through conditional reforms receiving targeted assistance. Cooperation and synergy among the region's actors and their medium-sized neighbours are also promoted in the process. The over-arching question about the success of this strategy is the credibility of the 'carrot' of EU/NATO membership if timetables become too extended. As our authors point out, however, Croatia's recent successful entry into the EU, and its presence with Albania in NATO, have provided both encouragement to the others and a practical local model. Manifold as these nations' problems may be, their smallness at this point in history is perhaps more helpful than not: providing flexibility for development, and the hope of – eventually – easy assimilation into the continent's powerful institutions.

The cases of Moldova and Georgia, placed in the Western fringe of the former Soviet Union, can make the Western Balkans' position look almost

fortunate. Both have seen parts of their territory fall under the de facto control of Moscow and its friends; in Georgia's case after an open, armed conflict in 2008. Both are prone to transnational ills that damage both themselves and their neighbours, and both have, at best, imperfect democracies and security systems. For these two states, however, smallness as such, and the preservation of identity are arguably not the key issues. Facing a strategic situation where the West cannot do much to help them and may even be half-hearted over their inclusion, they need to make fundamental national choices about what kind of shelter they can realistically seek and what price they will pay for it. Even more than the former Yugoslav states, they might need fundamental changes in their politics and world outlook to be able both to achieve and accept organized Europe's post-modern solutions. For the present, at least, there are more signs of possible acceptance of this bargain in Moldova's cautious, defensive, drive towards the EU than in Georgia's more assertive tactics.

Micro-states are a sub-set of the world's smallest states that share some basic challenges and that have often found idiosyncratic solutions. Applying a criterion of representation at the UN plus a population below one million, Archie Simpson identifies 44 such states in the world and ten in Europe. Ranging from Iceland to Montenegro and from Luxembourg to Malta by way of the Holy See, the latter are very diverse in location, wealth and security predicaments. Most do not maintain armed forces and are protected by a large neighbour, plus – in two cases – NATO. Cyprus suffers, however, from a tense internal division and hosts a UN peacekeeping mission. Micro-state economies have even more fundamental limitations, and in Europe have most often solved them by some combination of dependence on neighbours, sharing of currencies (now often the euro), and joining of collective institutions like the EU. Several have also explored profitable branches that are not size-dependent, such as casinos, banking services and tax havens. As discussed further in the third part of this book, this is a post-modern solution *par excellence* but also one that exposes small communities to transnational crime, abuse, and serious reputational risk. Simpson correctly stresses, therefore, the importance of good governance and points out that even among European states in this class, it is not automatically forthcoming.

### *Comparative insights: beyond Europe*

The third part, 'Comparative Insights', expands the book's purview and seeks to reveal parallels and contrasts by applying a similar analytical approach to three regions outside Europe that contain a significant number of small states. The regions are chosen because of their variety and because they have well-developed traditions of scholarship on security, or small states, or both. Here, the authors addressed the following key questions: (1) Why is this region and its smaller states relevant/interesting? (2) What are the most important security challenges faced by the state/s in question and how do the challenges relate to its/their 'smallness'? (3) What are the most important characteristics of this state/s/these states' security policy/policies? (4) Does the analysis yield



important insights and or lead to important policy advice for other states? The potential of regional integration in each relevant region is taken into account; while the final chapter addresses some generic issues about small polities worldwide, and the light they shed on an international system in rapid evolution.

In Chapter 11, by Ian Taylor, the first case-study takes Botswana as an example of a small developmental state in Africa and focuses on the *prima facie* riddle of its success. Together with a few others in its region, such as Mauritius, it has attained soaring growth rates only exceeded by the 'small tigers' of Asia. To understand the reasons for this growth, it is necessary to explore the typical economic security challenges of a poorer, ex-colonial state; and what Botswana seems to show is that the world community's orthodox notions of promoting development by reducing state power may be wrong-headed. Admittedly well placed in other dimensions of security, Botswana has succeeded through its efforts to keep control of its own strategic resources (diamonds) and to deploy the proceeds through a strong government and a strong, competent bureaucracy for interventionist development planning. In the process, the country has avoided many of the pitfalls indicated by the analysis of small state vulnerabilities (cf. Chapter 5). Botswana's development trajectory has not been unproblematic: the country still has immense levels of inequality and poverty. However, elements within Botswana's post-independence history could be useful for other poorer small states to take on board, not just in Botswana's African neighbourhood, but elsewhere as well.

In Chapter 12, Alan Chong begins by analysing general traditions of statehood in Asia and shows that, historically, merit and authority depended on factors quite unrelated to size. The present self-conceptions and threat perceptions of Asian small states reflect the way these longer traditions have been overlaid by colonial influences – including the creation of new ethnic mixes as well as boundaries – and the Manichaean culture of the Cold War. The contrasting case-studies of Singapore and Sri Lanka both show how, as a result, external worries driven by asymmetrical relationships are compounded by fears of internal dissent, in what the author calls an 'intermestic' mix. For Sri Lanka, the overriding internal issue is that of the conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, which not only prompted the recent bloody civil war, but has since driven government attempts to balance with other large actors, such as China, against the presumptively pro-Tamil Indian power. Singapore, for its part, had a long struggle even to establish its permanent statehood vis-à-vis Malaysia and to secure its territory against the even larger neighbour, Indonesia. Its rulers have sought to suppress risks from internal ethnic diversity by a policy of strong government, underpinned by would-be distinct Singaporean values, and a corporatist approach to working with non-state sectors. The price is a certain 'strategic paranoia' that demands constant vigilance and effort – like pedalling to stay on a bicycle. Externally, Singapore's initial Cold War dependence on the US has shifted towards an effort for multi-polar balance that includes acceptable forms of engagement with China. Singaporean concerns about conflict risks and non-military security are much eased by belonging to ASEAN, as well as to other

competent multilateral groups. Chong concludes that intermestic issues of identity-forming, including the question of who belongs as a citizen or 'who goes and who stays', are typical of today's security agendas and attempted solutions by the region's small states. The external framework in which such states operate, however, starts with their sometimes 'accidental construction' during the colonial period and remains strongly shaped and limited by the greater powers.

Chapter 13, by Timothy Shaw, deals with the small island states of the Caribbean region: a collection of former (and some still present) colonies that have evaded the world's largest wars but are among those most heavily exposed to non-military security hazards. His analysis dwells on, and richly illustrates, the post-modern trends for which this region provides a prime laboratory. Regional and trans-regional networking, the dynamics of human crime and violence, the threat of climate change and the best-attuned governance responses, based on transnational networking and regulation – all operate just as much, and are equally decisive for good or bad security at the non-state as well as the traditional state level. Diasporas and 'transnational families', to give just one example, provide crucial flows of remittances but also 'export' Caribbean-style violence to other regions and facilitate the multi-billion dollar drugs trade. The concept of 'citizen security', an interesting counterpoint to the Nordic 'societal security' introduced in Chapter 4, has grown up to define the positive solutions for which local and global, state and non-state actors can and should collaborate. In terms of wealth, development and resilience, the Caribbean region (however defined) is very diverse and will no doubt remain so. Clearly, for all its small states, transnational threat factors and transnational solutions will determine future fortunes as much as, and often more than, any traditional security calculus.

In Chapter 14, Godfrey Baldacchino reverts to the generic theme of small territories worldwide that are endowed with statehood while lacking some or all of its traditional power characteristics. These face the starkest version of asymmetry, both in their regional and global relations; yet, as the author shows with rich examples drawn from all non-European regions, it is not impossible for David to survive the contest with Goliath. The variety and intensity of their experience is best understood if the nature of statehood can be re-framed in Foucault's terms as 'the smart deployment of actual and potentially available capacities to secure desirable fiscal, human, material, legal or geopolitical resources'. In an interconnected world, a small actor can sometimes extend a long way by such means, and can explore many niches that only make sense in terms of relations with larger counterparts such as 'offshore' services. However, intrinsic handicaps of smallness include the existential impact of quite small natural, economic and other events; the lack of a hinterland and of diversity, whereby a setback in one key sector may impose a total switch of profile or the large-scale export of population; and the ease of 'capture' by commercial, criminal or other external interests. Baldacchino concludes that any really small polity will go through a crisis sometime, the only question being when and of what

kind. Yet most such states, even when recently created, do survive; and the 'creative political economy' used by those who manage to prosper could offer lessons even to larger players on how to cope with the globalized age. If this finding echoes Griffiths' remarks on small states' economic adaptability, Baldacchino also recalls Archer's chapter by ending with a case of 'norm entrepreneurship' at the UN, where European and non-European small states wielded 'soft power' together.

### The lessons

As stressed above, the study of small states as we seek to use it is not a reductionist theory. It may be approached through and combined with any of the dominant theories of International Relations (IR), from realism through to social constructivism and beyond. It is at its best, however, when it is used to test such theories through the exploration of outlying cases, and to challenge any over-monolithic view of either statehood or the international system generally.

Preparing this volume has been an exercise both in enriching and in challenging the 'small state' concept itself. First and most obviously, when talking about small states and security, the book's different sections show the complex nature of – and the need for a critical approach to – both terms involved. Small states themselves are just as diverse as any other constructed category in international society. They overlap variously with other categories, such as developing and developed; 'weak states' (in the twenty-first century sense); and well-governed states – modern and post-modern. Where they stand along these three axes – plus the axis of economic vulnerability, as discussed in Griffiths' chapter – provides perhaps the best starting-point for assessing the character and manageability of their security challenges.

Merely being small, or even very small, if a state enjoys external and internal peace and wise governance, may be a factor that reduces rather than multiplies security headaches. It eliminates the need to make a pretence of self-sufficient defence or even to create military forces at all. It dampens expectations of a significant outgoing contribution to global goods like peacekeeping and, rather, creates a supposition of importing help in natural and accidental emergencies. Such a state is arguably less 'state-like' than others in traditional IR terms, and the micro-states covered in Chapter 10 are the most extreme and clear examples. Add a modicum of flexibility and inventiveness to the mix, however, and small actors may emerge – as shown by examples in Chapter 14 – as remarkably well-attuned to the rules of survival both in today's and tomorrow's increasingly globalized world.

When things go wrong in security terms, then like Tolstoy's unhappy families, there are almost as many variants of trouble as there are small states themselves. Parts II and III of this book bear out the contention in Part I that newer, broader definitions of security, including non-state threats and economic and functional dimensions, can better capture the full spectrum of small state challenges than the post-World War II realist discourse, with its purely military and

territorial focus. To be sure, geopolitical location continues to be of central importance to small state security, but the case-studies in this volume illustrate how many small states inside and outside Europe have a considerable action space when deciding how to confront the challenges spurred by location and power politics. Accordingly, within the four-way framework proposed in Chapter 2, the small states covered in the geographical chapters emerge with very diverse combinations of security priorities. Only a minority of those discussed, such as the Western Balkan states and Sri Lanka, have the consequences of recent internal armed conflict near the top of their agendas, and this is in line with the slowly decreasing frequency of such conflicts (or at least 'major' ones) worldwide.<sup>6</sup> A larger number, from the Baltic States through to Singapore, are coping with prominent or residual threats from bigger neighbours of dubious intent. Just about all face economic challenges that call for constant effort and inventiveness to stay afloat, whether at a higher or lower level of wealth and development. All, to some degree, are open to issues of security of supply, transnational human challenges like crime, and natural ones like pollution and climate change, and various kinds of civil emergencies. A final variant in the mix is the perception, whether justified or not, of 'enemies within', which may be triggered either by long-standing ethnic divisions, or by concern over being swamped and culturally diluted by immigration.

To be of any use, this book's analysis cannot stop at documenting such issues but needs to consider how small states can best grapple with them. It is here that the 'relational' approach to small state identity, as proposed earlier in this introductory chapter, really proves its worth. Any small state in a region populated mainly by states of similar and medium size (such as Europe, the Caribbean or the Pacific) has different options from one whose only external relations – both with potential problem states *and* protectors – are severely asymmetrical. Further, both similarity and asymmetry vis-à-vis neighbours can make their mark on national predicaments at several different levels of absolute size. The common factors in the most problematic cases are quintessentially relational, and often include subjective or constructed elements: lack of room for manoeuvre, de facto compromised sovereignty, but also a sense of smallness as helplessness and victimhood that, at worst, may lead the small actor itself into bad choices. Hard though some may find it to accept, Chapter 9, on Georgia and Moldova, correctly notes Georgia's own contribution to the circumstances that triggered war with Russia in 2008. Critical observers might also see instances of counter-productive, provocative behaviour in the recent story of the Baltic States. Few could claim that all the small Western Balkan states, or Sri Lanka, are free of all responsibility for their own sufferings.

This only takes us as far, however, as concluding that small states in asymmetric situations may or may not find improved solutions by means that include their own wisdom and restraint. To explain more fully the differences reflected in this volume's chapters, another factor should be brought into the picture: the presence, absence and relative effectiveness of multilateral regional or sub-regional organizations. Chapter 2 proposes the hypothesis that small states

should have a better chance of moderating both their hard and soft security problems if one or more functional groupings of this kind are present. Such a thesis is in line with recent directions in small state studies that explore the generic relevance of institutions as 'shelters'—capable of supplementing or even supplanting the more traditional state–protector relationship (e.g. Bailes and Thorhallsson 2013). How far do the case-studies in Parts II and III of this volume bear this theory out?

The European cases covered in Part II actually fit it well. The Nordic and Baltic nations are all living with an asymmetric, historically threatening and still ambiguous neighbour, namely Russia. All have, however, gained high or very high levels of wellbeing and an almost complete immunity (by now) from military or political domination, with no crushing societal or economic costs in terms of their own militarization. First and foremost, this is thanks to their region being covered for hard security purposes by NATO (and by the US through NATO), and for economic and functional security purposes by the EU. However, the way that the two sets of states have worked together among themselves has also been an important and arguably essential part of the mix. By establishing strong and ostensibly de-securitized, inter-Nordic ties during the Cold War, the Nordic states have built a kind of security community that surmounts persistent divisions in institutional status and takes aggression or damaging competition among themselves out of the equation. More recently, overt Nordic security and defence cooperation has begun to address sub-regional challenges (including Arctic ones) in an efficient mode of subsidiarity and has enhanced relative Nordic standing in the European policy game. The Baltic States would not have gained EU and NATO entry so fast, nor have been able to exploit these institutions' cover so well, had they not teamed up for local security purposes and also drawn in Nordic advice and aid at crucial stages. These countries have added to their security by enshrining their relations with Russia in regional multilateral frameworks – the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Council for Baltic Sea States – that allow an inclusive web of linkages to be established between all neighbouring states and their societies.

The prospects of the Western Balkan states depend most obviously on their integration into NATO and the EU, the only extant frameworks powerful enough to overcome these states' recent mutual enmity and still-existing internal ethnic divisions. Sub-regional processes in this part of Europe were initially – and understandably in post-war conditions – designed from outside.<sup>7</sup> However, if one goes through the motions long enough, even in imposed behaviours, they may start to have a real transformative effect. Chapter 8 interestingly suggests that not only have key local actors understood the need to 'show willing' in their mutual relations for pragmatic purposes of accession strategy (hence the recent Serbia-Kosovo agreement), but that cross-border and wider transnational flows in the region are beginning to take positive effect both in concrete economic and in attitudinal terms.

The situation of Moldova and Georgia makes an instructive contrast. Their predicament can be put down first and foremost to 'location, location, location',

with Moldova being on the borderline of the EU's and NATO's present strategic reach and Georgia fatally beyond it. The Russia that has grudgingly accepted the Baltic States' full independence and Western integration is the same nation that has managed to prise away parts of Moldovan and Georgian territory, and to restrict (in practice) these states' strategic options. The presence or absence of Western – including US – ability and will to challenge Russia's local dominance is the most obvious variable in the two cases: but it is not the only one. The complete failure of the independent states emerging from the Western part of the former Soviet Union to create sub-regional groupings with real clout and mutual loyalty<sup>8</sup> is also important, especially when contrasted with Nordic, Baltic or non-European (to be covered shortly) examples. It bears out the relativistic slant of the relational hypothesis by showing that a small state may be effectively alone in handling a dominant neighbour, even when it has other neighbours of a similar smallness. Finally, and also to be discussed further in Chapter 9, Moldova's and Georgia's own weaknesses of governance and security management have aggravated their exposure to hostile interference, just as they have impeded their progress towards Western integrated standards.

It may be tempting to dismiss this analysis as Euro-centric. In fact, the chapters in Part III suggest that factoring in the element of regional and sub-regional organization does have a wider explanatory value, so long as variations in the local concept of statehood – and hence of inter-state relations – are taken into account. In Southeast Asia, for example, older traditions separate the strength and influence of states from their objective size, while modern approaches to multilateral cooperation eschew the internally intrusive imposition of standards that is central to EU-style integration. Yet the availability of the sub-regional ASEAN network to a small actor like Singapore, and larger frames like the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), where balancing tactics can be essayed towards China, has played a real part in minimizing and containing physical conflicts in the neighbourhood and in creating conditions for non-zero-sum regional growth. Chapter 13, on the Caribbean, explores in detail how the transnational and post-modern nature of most security challenges for that cluster of small states has drawn solutions based on regional and global network-building in its wake. This chapter, together with Chapter 14, rightly reminds us that just as the new security challenges are often of non-state origin, so the equivalent of regional institution-building in the business, NGO and civil society spheres can also be an important part of solutions – and one where notions of small state weakness under realist analysis become less and less relevant. To the extent that such approaches succeed, they reduce the need and scope for outside powers' interference and divide-and-rule attempts, and thus reinforce the need to rethink traditional realist logic if we are to understand the security challenges and opportunities of small states.

What seems to need more study, and is just starting to be more deeply probed in Europe, is the price that small states must pay for the multiple security benefits of institutionalization. Aside from direct expenses and the impact of intrusive standardization, serious burdens may be involved in shouldering the security agendas of other, larger and/or more exposed integration partners, and in

contributing to collective institutional interventions outside the home area. The normative hazard of having to espouse partners' self-interested and possibly aggressive policies is not wholly irrelevant here, though the risks are probably less than when bandwagoning with a single large protector, who may make more arbitrary and extreme choices than an institution working by consensus. Further, the intrusive regulatory impact of the more deep-reaching multilateral structures may start to undermine national identity itself, in a way that traditional empires often markedly failed to do. It would be good to see more work done on investigating such benefit–cost equations of regionalization in non-European cases, including Eurasian examples like the Russian-led groupings and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Other areas not covered in this book, but where interesting variations might be discovered, are the sub-regions of Africa, Central America, and the cluster of small Arab states in the Gulf.

This discussion may appropriately end where Chapter 2 also ends: by noting the importance of internal security governance. No state, however small, is entirely without free will in this matter. The smallest states can be just as divided, corrupt, incoherent and inconsistent in forming and executing security strategies as any large state; they may even fall more readily into such traps when they discount the need for formal structures. Yet good internal governance, including intra-governmental and cross-sectoral coordination and a minimum of democratic control, makes a real difference to success in any environment and under any analytical framework. Realistically, this implies maximizing national strength and leaving no cracks for hostile forces to exploit (a point interestingly explored in Chapter 12). In a more post-modern environment, where institutional shelters are available, demonstrating good governance and 'interoperable' practices in this as well as other spheres can make all the difference in the feasibility and speed of integration, while at the same creating new challenges in the form of 'goodwill competition' among small states vying for influence over institutional inclusion and the attention of the great powers (Mouritzen and Wivel 2005b: 34–36).

As the Chapter 4, on 'societal' security will stress, this reasoning does not imply that any single governance model or terminology – least of all a Euro-centric one – should be imposed on all small states. It does mean that all of them would do well to ask questions about their internal as well as external practices, in the light of the analysis and empirical case-studies offered by this book.

## Notes

- 1 'Should small states be categorized along geographic, demographic or economic lines, or do institutions, resources, and power hold the key?' ask Smith *et al.* in a discussion of small states (Smith *et al.* 2005). Students of International Relations are unlikely to deliver a uniform answer to this question, or even to agree on whether the question is correctly posed for an understanding of the nature and challenges of small states.
- 2 Important contributions to the realist perspective on international relations include, for example, Morgenthau (1948), Waltz (1979) and more recently Mearsheimer (2001). For discussions on the contemporary state of realism, see Booth (2011) and Lobell *et al.* (2009).

- 3 'Micro-states' in Europe are commonly defined to include Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino and the Vatican City. See Chapter 10 in this volume.
- 4 Following Väyrynen, Archer and Nugent suggest that we combine objective factors such as 'size of diplomatic corps' and 'size of GDP' with subjective factors such as 'foreign governments' view of a state's size and capability' and 'domestic governments' view of its own state's size and capability' (Archer and Nugent 2002: 2–3).
- 5 See also the discussions by Knudsen (1996: 5) and Gärtner (1993: 303), which preceded the current development of the small state concept but introduced a similar critical approach to the power possession definition.
- 6 According to SIPRI (the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute), state-to-state conflicts in 2002–2011 averaged 33 per year compared with 53 in 1992. Cases of 'one-sided violence' halved in 2002–2011, while non-state conflicts initially halved during that period but then returned to 38 per year (Themnér and Wallenstein 2013: 52–57).
- 7 While the Western Balkans were covered by an earlier and larger Central European Initiative, the first sub-region-specific framework – the Southeast European Cooperation Initiative – was devised in 1996 under the guidance of the then Senior Director for Eastern Europe in the United States National Security Council, Richard Schifter. Its modern successor, the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), is covered in Chapter 8 of this volume.
- 8 The problem has two levels. First, the states of the region are split as to their basic strategic orientation: towards cooperation with Russia (Belarus, Armenia), or towards the West and Turkey (Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan), with Ukraine often oscillating in between. Second, both the GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova Organization for Democracy and Economic Development) grouping aimed at balancing Russia, and the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), have severe institutional weaknesses including a failure to overcome the basic bilateral dynamic in their respective members' relations with Moscow (Bailes *et al.* 2007).

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